



*Photos by Creston Shrum*

**Jody Rodgers, soil conservation technician at the Conway Field Service Center, discusses a conservation plan with F.W. and Janet Dicus.**

## **EQIP: Third application beneficial for Perry County farmers**

The third time was the charm for a poultry and cattle farming operation in Perry County.

F.W. and Janet Dicus, who raise between 300,000 and 450,000 broiler chickens a year in four house and sell approximately 30 calves a year, are receiving more than \$29,000 through the 2003 Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

The Dicus' applied for EQIP funding in 2000 and 2001 but didn't get selected.

"We really didn't understand how to apply before," Janet said. "We didn't even know what was available."

That's where Joe Tapp, district conservationist, and Jody Rodgers, soil conservation technician at the Conway Field Service Center, came in.

"The staff at Conway showed us what was available and how to apply. They've been great to work with," she said.

"The diversity of what they are going to do is what helped them get funded this year," said Rodgers.

"The largest part of the EQIP contract is for the poultry operation," he said. "The plan calls for cost-sharing the cost of alum treatment of the litter, a stacking shed for waste storage, manure transfer and an animal mortality facility."

The majority of their operation is raising broiler chickens – something they've been doing for 18 years. The major issue with raising a large number of chickens is the litter they produce.

"Alum treatment is an effective way to reduce phosphorus runoff, decrease ammonia volatilization from litter and improve the fertilizer value of the litter," Rogers said.

The conservation plan also calls for fencing, pasture and hay planting and a pond for the 40 cows and three bulls the Dicus' run on their 114 acre farm.

Five acres are being set aside for upland wildlife habitat management. The area will be seeded with orchard grass and white clover and provide wildlife cover.

## 2003 Environmental Quality Incentives Program

### Overview

Strong interest and participation in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program continued through 2003.

Applications requesting federal cost-share funds totaling more than \$76 million were submitted by 4,606 landowners.

The Arkansas fiscal year 2003 allocation for financial assistance was approximately \$11 million, \$65 million short of the requested needs in the state.

Natural Resources Conservation Service staff and partners developed and

approved 570 Environmental Quality Incentives Program conservation plans and contracts.

### Accomplishments

Environmental Quality Incentives Program financial assistance has been distributed in Arkansas to address six major statewide resource concerns. Funding totaled more than \$2.3 million for water quality/grassland, more than \$568,000 for water quality/cropland, more than \$3.9 million for water quality/animal waste, more than \$3.4



million for irrigation water quantity, more than \$832,100 for plant health/forestry and more than \$242,800 for wildlife.

EQIP activities are carried out according to an EQIP plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer.

Contracts that include a waste storage structure for a confined livestock feeding operations require development and implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plans.

This plan is approved by the local conservation district.

Practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions. Farmers and ranchers may elect to use an approved technical service provider for technical assistance.

EQIP applications are accepted throughout the year. NRCS evaluates each application using state-

and locally-developed evaluation process.

Higher priorities are given to applications that encourage the use of cost-effective conservation practices, address national conservation priorities and optimize environmental benefits.

EQIP may pay up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices important to improving and maintaining the health of natural resources in the area.

Incentive payments may be made to encourage a producer to adopt related land management practices. Limited resource farmers and beginning farmers may be eligible for up to 15 percent additional cost-share of the cost of conservation practices.

### Outlook

Past levels of participation that exceeded available funds is one measure of success. In addition, there has been an increase in inquiries and invitations to discuss EQIP at producer meetings statewide. Only 21 percent of applicants were funded in 2003.

Many district conservationists report large numbers of applications even though no formal announcement that funds are available has been made yet. These activities indicate the need for continued program support to address significant resource concerns.

### State Contact

Jim Caudle, State Resource Conservationist, Room 3416 Federal Building, 700 West Capitol Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72201, (501) 301-3122, [Jim.Caudle@ar.usda.gov](mailto:Jim.Caudle@ar.usda.gov)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.